

Creating Community Through Great Music 2021-2022

# Chamber Music Amici

## *Bunch & Brahms*

Monday, April 11 • 7:30 PM

The Shedd Institute for the Arts



Art: *The Key to Music*, by Nora Rodabaugh

**Amici** Jessica Lambert *violin* Steven Pologe *cello* Sharon Schuman *violin*

**Guests** Kenji Bunch *viola/composer* Arnaud Ghillebaert *viola* Monica Ohuchi *piano*

**Season Sponsor**



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Chamber Music Amici receives support from the Oregon Arts Commission, a state agency funded by the State of Oregon and the National Endowment for the Arts.



**Thank You Olivia (Bonnie) Lindberg**

October 6, 1949 – December 27, 2021

Bonnie was a long-time volunteer and season ticket holder, giving hundreds of hours over the past 3+ years helping staff organize an Operations Manual and assisting with the transition to a new database. Bonnie was committed to working one day a week in our office when she was not enjoying the Oregon Coast or on her annual winter trip to California. Bonnie was generous, funny, smart, and loved Amici concerts. Bonnie was diagnosed with Acute Myeloid Leukemia (AML) in early December and passed away later in the month.

Bonnie is missed!

*Welcome!*

We are happy to return to The Shedd Institute of the Arts for this very special concert. The first half of our program, String Circle, is a string quintet that uniquely features two violas. Amici musicians have enjoyed collaborating with Kenji Bunch both as the composer of this piece and a fabulous guest violist. We are also delighted to have pianist Monica Ohuchi, whose artistry is a true inspiration, join us for the Brahms piano quartet. We hope you enjoy listening to the fabulous Oregonian husband-wife duo as they share their captivating musical spirit with the Chamber Music Amici!

 Eunhye Grace Choi, Artistic Director



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## **Program**

### **String Circle**

Kenji Bunch

- I. *Lowdown*
- II. *Shuffle Step*
- III. *Ballad*
- IV. *Porch Picking*
- V. *Overdrive*

*Jessica Lambert, violin; Sharon Schuman, violin; Kenji Bunch, viola;  
Arnaud Ghillebaert, viola; Steven Pologe, cello*

### **Piano Quartet No.3 in C Minor, Op. 60**

Johannes Brahms

- I. *Allegro non troppo*
- II. *Scherzo: Allegro*
- III. *Finale: Allero comodo*

*Monica Ohuchi, piano; Jessica Lambert, violin;  
Kenji Bunch, viola; Steven Pologe, cello*

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**This Season is dedicated to**  
Victor Steinhardt 1942 – 2021  
friend, colleague, and fellow musician

I first met Victor when I had him as summer teacher during my years as a high school pianist. He was my favorite kind of musician: an artist who made you forget entirely the 'percussion' aspect of the piano as he brought out the warmth and resonance of every lyrical line and demanded that you make clear the different colors of all the voices in chordal passages. So, it was such a pleasure for me to play "Running Blue". Throughout the rehearsal process, I felt like Victor was there with us in spirit, as the music embodies both his formidable intellect in its intricate rhythmic challenges and the wiggling of his Groucho Marx eyebrows in its jazzy, sly sense of humor. Always a gentleman, he reached out to all of us after the performance to give his kudos and thanks -- what a gift.

*Lillie Manis, Amici Core Musician*



## Program Notes

**Kenji Bunch** (1973-) Inspired by communities of fiddlers who gather to create music together, the title *String Circle* also refers to the continuum of tradition each generation of string players passes along to the next every time we pick up those boxes of wood. In each of the work's five movements, I explore a different component of American string playing. The first movement draws from the powerful rhythmic energy and raw, unvarnished emotion of Old-Time Appalachian fiddling and singing. While remaining relatively static harmonically, the development of the material comes from the layering of rhythmic dance patterns and a contrapuntal treatment of the songlike melodies, played with straight tone, rather than the typical classical string vibrato. The scherzo that follows offers tribute to Western Swing, specifically the close harmony of the twin and triple fiddles of Bob Wills and The Texas Playboys. The cello adopts the role of string bass, with the exception of a melodic passage in what would be the "trio" section. The central third movement bears the most dramatic weight of the work. Conceived as a lament in honor of the late Johnny Cash, who died while I was writing this work, this movement is a setting of the traditional spiritual *Wayfaring Stranger*. The song is interrupted by an ascending viola line that the others gradually join, each at a different rate (using a 15th century technique called a prolation canon). This cycle creates a wash of tenuous, ever-changing harmonies that suggest the ascension to the heavens to which the folk song refers. This lament is followed by a second scherzo, played entirely *pizzicato*, with twangy slides in between notes, suggesting the unique sounds of another string instrument; the banjo. Amid the plucking, the second viola begins to strum the instrument in the style of an *'ukelele*, creating a temporary diversion to the Hawaiian Islands. Lastly, we hear a fast, furious dance that updates the musical influences from folk to funk. Displaying the versatility of the string instruments, this movement suggests their continuing relevance in music of a more contemporary vernacular. In a work full of tributes, there remains a significant one that deserves mention. Translating folk music into a concert work is certainly not a new idea, and one cannot discuss this process without mentioning the giant of both 20th century composition and ethnomusicology- Béla Bartók. The chiasmic structure of *String Circle* (rhythmic, contrapuntal first movement, scherzo, slow movement, *pizzicato* second scherzo, and fast dance) is taken verbatim from the form of Bartók's seminal 4th String Quartet. Additionally, the ending of the finale includes a fleeting reference to the Fibonacci series, a numerical sequence Bartók used in several works.



**Johannes Brahms** (1833-1897) started work on the *Piano Quartet No. 3, in C Minor* in 1855. It was his first attempt with this combination of instruments and at the time, he was in love with Clara Schumann. They had become closer after her husband (Robert Schumann) had been institutionalized. Although Clara and Johannes remained lifelong friends and colleagues, an enduring romantic union was not meant to be. Brahms was distraught, and he poured his feelings of unrequited love into the work. Like the relationship, he was not pleased with the direction that it was going. Instead of destroying it—as he usually did—Brahms tabled the piece for the next twenty years. Other than his *Ballades Op. 10*, he published no new works in the last half of that decade. He even wrote to Clara saying that he didn't know “at all how one composes, how one creates.” The 1860s, by contrast, saw a burst of creativity. In addition to a few piano compositions and vocal works, he wrote a slew of important chamber music pieces—his two string sextets, the *Horn Trio*, a cello sonata, his *Piano Quintet in f minor*, and the first two published piano quartets. Later, during the winter of 1873, he dusted off his first piano quartet. He altered the opening movement in several ways including shifting its tonality from c# to c minor. He worked on the remaining movements for the next two years. The original slow movement was tossed and what was intended to be the finale was reworked to become the published version's scherzo.

The work's first movement (*Allegro non troppo*) is dramatic and overtly passionate. It is as beautiful as it is structurally bizarre. Officially in sonata form, there is a sort of theme-and-variations in lieu of secondary material. Even stranger, the recapitulation lands squarely on G Major instead of the textbook c minor. The second movement (*Scherzo: Allegro*) sounds angry and defiant. This too is structurally odd in that he skips the trio section altogether. The slow movement (*Andante*) introduces us—for the first time in this piece anyway—to the mature Brahms. A tender melody delivered by the cello eventually gives way to utterly nostalgic writing shared between the violin and viola. The dreamlike quality of the middle section is enhanced by Brahms' syncopated lines setting up 2-against-3 polyrhythms. Many of these ideas are reintroduced before the tranquil ending in E Major allows the movement to eventually fade into the distance. One would be forgiven for thinking that the fourth movement (*Finale: Allegro comodo*) is borrowed from a violin-piano sonata given how long it takes for the other two ensemble members to be introduced. When they do enter, their parts are as subservient as it gets. The mood here—like the onset of the piece—is dark but expressive. A chorale-like section featuring the violin and viola—and accompanied with *leggiero* piano arpeggios—provides a moment of repose before the brooding opening material returns. The development section utilizes the opening material and chorale writing, but often at a whisper. Shortly after slinking back to the home key of c minor, the movement's opening theme is presented in octaves amongst the strings in a defiant statement. The coda flips roles with the chorale melody—in this case giving it to the piano and at a forte dynamic. It is clear that all is not right with the world, though, given the fiery string responses. Ultimately, the work concludes seemingly with a sense of acceptance by the composer regarding the things over which he has no control.

—M. Brent Williams



## **Amici**

**Jessica Lambert** has played with Amici for seven years and completed her rotation as Artistic Director two years ago. She is a graduate of The Eastman School of Music, where she studied with Zvi Zeitlin and members of the Cleveland Quartet. Other major teachers include Alice Schoenfeld and Alexander Treger. Concertmaster of the Corvallis Symphony Orchestra since 2007, she is also the Artistic Director of the OSU Chamber Music Workshop, an intensive quartet program held in Corvallis in July. Jessica is widely recognized as a teacher and maintains a private studio in Corvallis. Her students have won regional and national competitions and have matriculated to the nation's most prestigious conservatories and summer programs. She has played viola with the Oregon Symphony and violin with the El Paso Symphony. She was concertmaster of the El Paso Pro Musica Chamber Orchestra, for which she was a featured soloist in the New Music series. A frequent guest of the Chintimini Music Festival since 2004, she performs as a soloist and chamber player throughout the Northwest.

**Steven Pologe** has performed throughout the United States, and in Italy, Sweden, Taiwan, South Korea, Thailand, New Zealand, and Canada. His CDs include quartets by William Grant Still and All That Jazz (both with the Oregon String Quartet), works by Jon Deak for solo cello and piano trio, and the piano trio of Lev Abeliovich. Steven is professor of Cello at the University of Oregon. He has performed frequently with the Oregon Bach Festival, Grand Teton Music Festival, Aspen Music Festival, Rome Festival Orchestra, and the Green Mountain Chamber Music Festival. In 2006, Pologe and a colleague in neuroscience won a grant from the organization behind the coveted Grammy awards, the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences. The award supported his research and publications documenting the precise movements of string players. Prior to moving to Oregon, Pologe was principal cellist with the Honolulu Symphony and faculty member at the University of Hawaii. To keep up with all Steven's activities, find him here, on his website, [www.stevenpologe-cello.com](http://www.stevenpologe-cello.com).



**Sharon Schuman** is co-founder of Chamber Music Amici and served as Artistic Director for the first six years. As a child, she studied violin with Carol Weston, a student of Leopold Auer. After a summer grant to the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, she won a full scholarship in music to Stanford University, where she performed on a resident Strad. After she graduated with a degree in English, she earned a Ph.D. in that discipline at the University of Chicago. She has performed in a master class for Vladimir Spivakov and as concerto soloist with Oregon Mozart Players and the Salem Chamber Orchestra. She has also performed with the Oregon Bach Festival and Eugene Symphony, and she has served as concertmaster for Eugene Opera, Eugene Ballet, Eugene Concert Choir, and Oregon Mozart Players. She is now Assistant Concertmaster of the Eugene Opera Orchestra. After publishing *Freedom and Dialogue in a Polarized World* (2014), she edited *A Voice for Justice: Writings of David Schuman* (2021). Sharon is the 2021 recipient of the Eugene Arts and Letters Award.

## **Guests**

**Kenji Bunch** uses his work as a composer and performer to look for commonalities between musical traditions, for understandings that transcend cultural or generational barriers, and for empathic connections with his listeners. Mr. Bunch draws on vernacular musical traditions, his interest in history, the natural world, and his classical training to create new concert music with a unique personal vocabulary that appeals to performers, audiences, and critics alike. After nearly three decades as a professional musician, whose work has been performed by over sixty American orchestras, by chamber musicians on six continents, and has been recorded numerous times, he considers his mission to be the continuing search for and celebration of shared emotional truths about the human experience. Mr. Bunch maintains an active performing career and is widely recognized for performing his own groundbreaking works for viola. In the ongoing search for fluency in other musical styles, he developed a deep interest in vernacular American music and improvisation. Mr. Bunch was the fiddle player and vocalist with the band Citigrass for over 15 years, and is a frequent collaborator with jazz, pop, folk, country, rock, and experimental musicians. He has also collaborated extensively with choreographers and filmmakers. A graduate of the Juilliard School, Mr. Bunch left New York City after 22 memorable years to return to his native Portland, Oregon, where he currently serves as Artistic Director of new music group Fear No Music, and teaches at Portland State University, Reed College, and for the Portland Youth Philharmonic.



**Arnaud Ghillebaert** has played under the baton of great conductors such as Sir Colin Davis and Herbert Blomstedt and in the following orchestras: the London Symphony Orchestra, the Academy of Saint Martin in the Fields, the Bournemouth Symphony, Scottish Opera, Opera North, touring all over Europe. An avid chamber musician, he performed at the Louis Moreau Institute in New Orleans and in the “Starry Nights” music series at the Staller Center for the Arts (NY) alongside Eugene Drucker (Emerson String Quartet) and Nick Cords (Silkroad Ensemble); he recently performed in a recital with pianist Anton Nel. He is a founding member of the Elsewhere Ensemble, a chamber group mixing music and spoken word/theater. He completed his Doctorate in viola and violin performance at Stony Brook University and is the current University of Oregon viola instructor.

**Monica Ohuchi**, a Japanese American pianist, performs “with beauty, clarity and drive... [offering a] warmth... and expressiveness [that’s] irresistible and deeply moving.” (*The Times Argus*) Filled with purpose, Ohuchi exudes a “commanding pianism.” (*The New York Times*) “Dutifully and gracefully” (*San Francisco Classical Voice*) attentive to musical depth and detail, Ohuchi offers uniquely generous and engaging performances. Her solo, chamber, and teaching career includes appearances across the US, Canada, Japan, and Europe at such venues as Lincoln Center's Alice Tully Hall, Meany Hall (Seattle), the Canadian Opera Company’s Richard Bradshaw Amphitheater, and Hakuju Concert Hall (Tokyo). A gracious and polished chamber musician, Ohuchi is a member of Fear No Music, and performs with Chamber Music Northwest (Oregon), the Chintimini Chamber Music Festival (Oregon) and Craftsbury Chamber Players (Vermont). With a passion for equity and diversity, Ohuchi serves as Executive Director of Fear No Music alongside her violist and composer husband, Kenji Bunch who is the group’s Artistic Director. “Fear No Music’s husband-and-wife leadership team... have spent the past five years making FNM the best kind of Portland hybrid: a classical ensemble with unimpeachable performance credentials, a love for local and contemporary composers, and a mature sense of social justice and responsibility.” (*Oregon ArtsWatch*). An engaging and dedicated music educator, Ohuchi is a frequent guest clinician, panelist, and competition adjudicator. Holding advanced degrees from the Juilliard School, Ohuchi currently teaches at Reed College, as Program Director of the Performing Arts Division. Visit Monica’s website at, [www.monicaohuchi.com](http://www.monicaohuchi.com)

## **Guest Speaker**

**Abigail Fine** is a music historian specializing in nineteenth-century music culture. She teaches survey courses in nineteenth- and twentieth-century music, the history of opera, and cultural-historical topic seminars on material studies, opera staging, and celebrity. Her research focuses on reception and materiality in Germany and Austria, with a current monograph project that explores how a widespread fascination with composers' earthly traces (relics, shrines, sites of pilgrimage) shaped the reception of their music.



Fine presents her research at conferences and symposia in the U.S. and abroad. Recent presentations include the American Musicological Society, the Sound and Secularity Symposium at Stony Brook University, *After Idealism* in Cambridge, UK, and *Music and the Middlebrow* in London. Her research has been supported by a Charlotte W. Newcombe Doctoral Dissertation Fellowship, an International Dissertation Research Fellowship from the Social Science Research Council, and the Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (DAAD).

Next pre-concert talks with Dr. Abigail Fine:

**Sunday, June 12, 2:15 PM and Monday, June 13, 6:45 PM**



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## Next

### Five on Five

Richard E. Wildish Theater

**Sunday, June 12 • 3:00 PM**

**Monday, June 13 • 7:30 PM**

### Program

**Ralph Vaughan Williams** Quintet in D Major for  
Clarinet, Horn, Violin, Cello & Piano

**César Franck** Piano Quintet in F Minor

### Amici

Eunhye Grace Choi *piano*

Lillie Manis *viola*

Sharon Schuman *violin*

### Guests

Tomás Cotik *violin*

Jason Duckles *cello*

Wonkak Kim *clarinet*

Lydia Van Dreel *horn*



Art: *Musical Pieces*, Megan Haight

**Tickets** [www.chambermusicamici.org](http://www.chambermusicamici.org) or 541.953.9204

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